

# "What We Did and How We Did It"

A summary of 10 reports presented  
at the sixth annual meeting  
of the Kentucky Public Health Association

**T**YPICAL of the day-to-day public health work in any community are the projects described in a series of informal reports presented by personnel from local health departments at a session of the 1954 Kentucky Public Health Association meeting, which was held in Louisville, May 19-21. Although not necessarily unique, these projects are worthy of note, for they are illustrative of what is being done in public health at the local level and, perhaps more important, of how it is being done. The projects range from raising funds for new health department buildings to conducting a mass blood-testing survey, from promoting the purchase of a new garbage truck to encouraging mothers to see that their children receive immunizations. Significantly, in every one of the projects, the key to success was citizen participation.

The series of reports is summarized here, with the thought that they may provide encouragement for other local public health workers facing similar problems. Moderator of the session was Sara C. Stice, director of public health education, Kentucky State Department of Health. Speakers on the program were:

Harry Barry, sanitarian, Ballard, Carlisle, Fulton, and Hickman County Health Departments.

M. V. Clark, administrator, Floyd County Health Department.

Thomas Goodin, sanitarian, Bell County Health Department.

Elizabeth Herman, nurse, Mercer County Health Department.

E. A. King, M.D., health officer, Harlan County Health Department.

George McKenzie, administrator, Garrard County Health Department.

Robert Mundy, sanitarian, Christian County Health Department.

Josephine Prewitt, clerk, Henry County Health Department.

Abbie Ricks, clerk, Trigg County Health Department.

Edwina Roberts, nurse, Henderson County Health Department.

## Floyd County



A recent mass blood-testing survey in Floyd County not only demonstrated that the county still has a syphilis control problem, but also showed what can be accomplished through public health education and good public relations, according to the report from the county health department's administrator. In a period of 12 working days, 4,200 persons, about one-twelfth of the county's population, were given blood tests. Thirty-two of the tests were positive, at least 20 of which were believed to represent cases of congenital syphilis.

The program was focused on seniors in the public high schools and was publicized as blood-

testing for syphilis with emphasis on congenital syphilis. It was made known, however, that the service was available to anyone in the county. Centering the program around the schools was considered the best way to encourage the public to take advantage of it. Actually, about 20 percent of the persons tested were not associated with the schools.

An intensive publicity campaign brought the program to the attention of the people. The weekly newspaper carried a streamer reading "Get a free blood test—see article below" and a front-page article during the week before and the first week of the survey. The local radio station broadcast a 15-minute recorded program and frequent spot announcements each day, giving the location of the mobile unit and urging the people to get a free blood test. A short film advertising the program was shown during intermission at the local drive-in theater. Through the efforts of the local physicians, milk companies, bread companies, wholesale grocers, and school officials, 20,000 handbills were distributed. During the week prior to the survey, a film and a talk on syphilis were presented to the school children, and the evening before the mobile unit was to visit a particular school, each child was given a handbill to take home to his parents.

Despite the success of the survey in terms of numbers of blood tests made and the splendid cooperation of many persons, it was felt that it perhaps failed to reach those who most needed to be reached. Children were heard to say, "My mother told me that she would whip me if I took a blood test," and it was believed that this was the attitude of many parents who were afraid their children might show a positive reaction.

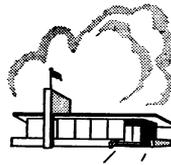
## Mercer County

SOON after its formation in 1950, the citizens health committee in Mercer County proved its value by helping the county health department secure funds to continue operation. A mass meeting of the committee with representatives from each of the civic organizations in the county resulted in substantial increase in the appropriations from all the contributing agencies. At present, the committee is working

on plans for a new health center. It has had speakers at meetings of all the civic clubs and has held a mass meeting to make plans for financing the project.

The Mercer County Health Department has received assistance in its maternal and child health program from another community group, the county homemakers club. Members of the club first made a survey to locate infants and preschool children who had not received immunizations. Then they visited the homes of these children, some of them in remote parts of the county, and invited the parents to bring the children to the clinics. They furnished transportation in many instances, and they assisted the clinic staff with recordkeeping.

## Fulton County



How funds were raised to build two new health centers was the project reported from Fulton County. Unable to obtain State funds to convert an unused school building into a health center, the health department decided to consider other means of accomplishing its objective. The board of health was asked to approve the building of new health centers, and the chairman of the board was selected to present the problem to the Chamber of Commerce in the town of Hickman and the Lions Club in the town of Fulton, Hickman and Fulton being the locations of Fulton County's two health department offices. Protests that the people had recently made large contributions to such projects as a factory, a ball park, and a swimming pool were raised, but the organizations agreed to see what could be done for the health department.

In Fulton, the Lions Club succeeded in raising about \$4,000 among the townspeople and, with the assistance of all the other civic groups in the area, another \$8,000 from the farmers. In Hickman, the Chamber of Commerce began its campaign with the farmers and succeeded in raising \$12,000, made up largely of \$200, \$150, and \$100 donations.

"If you and your county should undertake such a program, don't be discouraged by those

who tell you that it can't be done," the sanitarian declared. He pointed out that even if the money is not raised, the project will serve to bring the health department to the attention of the people.

## Henry County



To gain the support of the people for health programs, the Henry County Health Department has enlisted the aid of several groups—the county medical society, the rural health council, the parent-teacher association council, churches, and civic clubs. The rural health council discusses health problems and handles most of the publicity. Citizen participation through these groups has been especially effective in three of the health programs—tuberculosis control, sanitation, and nutrition—the health department clerk reported.

This year, 1954, was deemed Henry County's most successful in publicizing the tuberculosis mobile X-ray unit. Newspaper publicity included articles; half-page advertisements giving, among other information, a list of people who could provide transportation; a letter signed by the secretary of the medical society urging the people of the county to take advantage of the service; a proclamation signed by the county judge; and a letter of gratitude from a tuberculosis patient discovered in the 1953 survey.

Whenever the health department calls a meeting of citizens to help with any of its programs, the clerk explained, the importance of the meeting is made clear by stressing the specific responsibility of each person invited. Letters are written about a week in advance, and phone calls are made the day of the meeting as a reminder.

## Garrard County

**T**HE speaker from the Garrard County Health Department emphasized the importance of the "little things" in attaining success in public health work. Cleaning up prem-

ises, building a sanitary privy, or connecting to the city sewer and water system is not an earth-shaking event, but it is the sort of thing which counts, he said.

He attributed the success the health department has had in increasing its operating funds during the last 4 years to the fact that the health department has let the people know what it is trying to do and, at the same time, has paid heed to what the people want. He recommended that an opportunity to talk to community groups, to publish articles in the newspaper, or to write a report never be missed.

The Garrard County representative suggested that public health workers meet with the courts, the city councils, and the school boards, not only when they are asking for additional appropriations but at other times too. He also urged that they visit with the mayor, the judge, the magistrates, the school superintendents, and members of the medical profession.

## Trigg County



In Trigg County, improving child health was the initial concern of the recently organized citizens health committee. Three projects in this field were selected: a survey of the immunization status of all children under 3 years of age; contacting mothers of 3-month old infants to encourage them to take their children to the family doctor or the health department for immunizations; and organization of well-baby clinics. Committee members took over the responsibility of sending out mimeographed letters to mothers, and they visited each home from which the letter was not returned. They also helped to promote "Immunization Week."

Physicians have reported that several mothers brought their infants for immunizations as a result of the notices sent out by the committee, the health department clerk, who spoke for her agency, stated. She also noted that the work done so far by the citizens health committee has helped it to recognize other existing health problems and to realize that the problems are the people's problems, not just jobs for the health department. One committee mem-

ber has mentioned possible sanitary problems in school cafeterias, and another has suggested a dental health program, she said.

## Christian County



In Christian County the health department initiated and supervised an antirabic vaccination program, but it was the civic clubs, other organizations, and individuals of the communities who put the program over.

The Civitan Club of Hopkinsville was the first group to become interested in the program. As soon as a tentative schedule for the campaign was set up, the four local soft drink bottling companies offered to finance the printing of posters announcing the program. The senior class of Hopkinsville High School helped with the publicity and assisted when the campaign got underway by helping to fill out the vaccination forms. Four local veterinarians assisted in planning and carrying out the program.

The planning of newspaper and radio publicity began weeks in advance. Articles were submitted to the newspaper, and one day the program made the headlines. The newspaper also carried the daily schedule on the front page. During the week of the campaign, the local radio station broadcast three times a day a program recorded by the health department staff.

Emphasizing the importance of sound public relations in putting over any kind of health department program, the speaker from the Christian County Health Department urged public health workers to establish contacts with the leaders of the community. He felt that access to a radio station is of prime importance for a health department, and he considered the possession of a tape recorder "ideal."

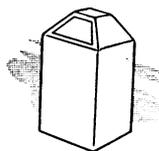
## Bell County

**G**ETTING the mayor and the city council of Pineville in Bell County to pass an ordinance for the purchase of a new garbage

truck, one with the capacity to carry a mechanical bed, began with the assembling of data on the garbage collecting practices. The Bell County Health Department sanitarian, who described this project, counted the number of stops the garbage truck made and the number of homes that did not have approved garbage cans. He showed the amount of time wasted in loading and unloading the truck and the number of unnecessary trips to and from the garbage dump.

The data were then presented to the people through reports in the local newspapers and the health department's weekly radio program. To get the key people of the community interested, a letter was sent to each of the 12 civic clubs in the Pineville area, explaining the project and asking them for their recommendation and approval. All the clubs voted to support the project, and, with the clubs' endorsements and the survey data, the health department sanitarian proposed the project to the city council.

## Harlan County



Not organized until April 1954, the advisory health council in Harlan County has already begun work on two projects: cleaning up roadsides, towns, and thickly settled communities, and a method for determining whether or not children are receiving the proper immunizations. For the first project, subcouncils, each composed of about 20 persons, have been organized in 5 communities to promote and carry out the work. For the second, a double postcard will be sent to every mother 6 months after the birth of her child, one-half of the card providing information on the type of immunizations the child needs and how to get them, the other half to be filled out and returned by the family physician. If no reply is received within a reasonable time, a public health nurse will visit the homes. The council, composed of 18 persons, includes representatives from ministerial associations and civic organizations, members of the boards of education, city and county officials, physicians, and businessmen.

## Henderson County

THE citizens health committee in Henderson County, soon after its reorganization in the summer of 1952, began work on three public health problems: sewage disposal, nutrition, and child health. Its first action was the formation of a special committee on each of these problems to collect facts and to plan ways of presenting them to the public.

A year and a half's work on the sewage disposal problem—Henderson, as well as other cities along the Ohio River, had been notified to take steps to prevent dumping of raw sewage into the river—has resulted in plans to build a sewage disposal plant which will cost an estimated \$3 million. To obtain this result, the sewage disposal committee began by presenting a program on the subject to civic clubs and other organizations.

The nutrition committee began its work with a preliminary 1-day diet survey, in which 288 children in the city and county schools participated. There followed a study of nutrition in two of the public schools. In January 1953

and again before the end of the school term, 3-day diet surveys were made, each child was weighed and measured, and hemoglobin determinations were done. On the first examination, many of the children showed a hemoglobin so low that the physicians working with the committee recommended giving them iron pills. On the second examination, several of the children showed an increase in hemoglobin and all had gained weight. This year the study is being repeated in the same schools.

The interest in nutrition stimulated by this study is exemplified by the request from the county superintendent of schools that a workshop be held for all workers in the school lunchrooms. The nutrition program has also served to show up another health problem in the county, namely, intestinal parasites. The medical representatives on the committee are currently gathering facts on this problem.

Toward improvement of child health, the committee's work has resulted in the organization of child health clinics at two housing projects. At these clinics, women of the community serve as hostesses and take heights and weights of the patients.

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## Lewis Ryers Thompson

**Dr. Lewis Ryers Thompson**, former Assistant Surgeon General of the Public Health Service, died at the Public Health Service Hospital in Baltimore, November 12, 1954, at the age of 71. Among the most notable of his achievements was the organization of the National Institutes of Health, of which he was director from 1937 to 1942.

A career officer in the Service for 36 years, Dr. Thompson served in all ranks. He was appointed Assistant Surgeon General in 1930, a position he held for 16 years. At the time of his retirement, November 1, 1946, he was chief of the Bureau of State Services.

Dr. Thompson also served as scientific director of the international health division, Rockefeller Foundation, and as a member of the division of medical sciences of the National Research Council. He was chief of the medical division of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey in Japan in 1945 and 1946, Gilman Thompson lecturer at the University of Cornell, and De Lamar lecturer at Johns Hopkins University. He is survived by his wife, son, and daughter, who reside at 3917 Virgilia Street, Chevy Chase, Md. Burial was in Arlington National Cemetery.